

TYAGARAJA AND PURANDARA DASA

S. Sreenivasa Rao

The eminence of Mahakavi Kalidasa in Sanskrit poetry was achieved by Tyagaraja in the field of music, which is sound-poetry. Even as we find in Kalidasa the obvious and pronounced reflections of Adi Kavi Valmeeki, in Tyagaraja too, the similarities to Purandara Dasa's compositions are striking. Kalidasa paid homage to Valmiki and even so Tyagaraja paid his homage to Sri Purandara Dasa in one of the benedictory verses found at the beginning of the great opera *Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam* in the following words,

दुरितव्रातमुल्लेखनुबरिमायेडि
हरिगुणमुलबाडुयु नेपुडुन
परवशुडै वेलमुपुर
दर दासुनि महिममुलनु दलयेद मदिलोनु ।।

Sri Tyagaraja and Purandara Dasa were both great devotees of God who adopted the way of life of *dasa koota*; they spurned wordly wealth and led lives of great renunciation and piety. They eschewed the temptations of the world and even so the divine light shone in their work. They were divinely inspired and lived like *jeevanmuktas* and *sparoksha gnanis*. They were great reformers of society and their wealth was their *vairagya bhagya*. They could write songs in the simple spoken-word idiom that appealed to the heart direct; they could express in simple words the loftiest ideals, the most charming aspects of the beautiful attributes of their *ista devatas*.—Sri Rama and Panduranga—and their attitude to God had a peculiar spon-

the *sahitya* of Tyagaraja; and there is *madhurya* in the *bhakti* of Tyagaraja. He is par excellence the *Madhurya Vaggeya Karaka* of Karnatak music. There are many more matters which call for mention, as for example, how in the composition of Tyagaraja, *tala* serves to give point and force to the sentiments expressed in the songs. In Tyagaraja we have a devoted *Ramabhakta*, an inspired composer of *bhajan* songs and classical music, a person who was learned in the *Puranas*, a philosopher and a moralist. He has left behind a heritage of over 800 songs which will remain as landmarks of devotion and of art music. It could be said of his songs, as of *Ramayana*:

यावत्स्थास्यलि गिरयः
सरितश्च महीतले
तावद्रामायण कथा
लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति ।।

Justice T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, was born in 1893 at Tirunalveli, Madras State. A Musicologist and vocalist, he was honoured as Sangeeta Kalamidhi by Madras Music Academy, 1944 and elected a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1964: Publications: articles on music, poems and dramas in Sanskrit. He was formerly a Judge of the Supreme Court of India, New Delhi, is Vice-President, Kalakshetra, Madras, President, Music Academy, Madras and associated with various Universities on their academic bodies in music.

taneity and a personal touch which helped them reach lyrical heights. *Ekavachana* is their right; *Rasa Maontidaka*—or *Baro Namma Manege*. “Drunk with the joy of music I call thee friend who art my Lord”, said the great poet of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore. In their compositions, when occasion demanded, the epithets could be ornate and excel for sheer literary beauty. They could write poetry, ballads, and simple couplets with rare gifts of thought and word. The appeal in their songs is intensely human and they sounded the depths of human nature. They gave in simple words the quintessence of our *Upanishads* and the *Puranas*. The *rasa* of *bhakti* had been most exhaustively dealt with and they were regarded in such high esteem both by their illustrious *gurus*—Sri Vyasaraya and Sonti Venkataramanayya—who declared “*Dasarendara Purandara Dasarayya*”, “*Dorakuna Isuvanti Sishyudu*” Their compositions are the epitome of the *Vedanta* and were justly styled—*Purandaropanishat* and *Tyagopanishat*. When we see pictures of Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja with the garb of *uncha vrithi*, an order likeable to active asceticism within the bounds of a *grihastha*, one is prompted to wonder if Sri Purandara Dasa was born once again in the blessed town of Kamalalaya, Tiruvalur, in Tanjore District. Even the great Vijaya Dasa, an inspired saint, has declared, *Naradare yee Roopa Dindali Tori Darusana Needuta*. Of Tyagaraja also, the tradition has it that he received the divine initiation from the sage Narada. So they lived a similar life, spoke the word of hope and devotion and elevated the order of musicians to those who are real seekers of *moksha*—God realisation.

There are two aspects in the comparative study of the great *dasas*, the *sahitya sampatti* (literary wealth) and the *Sangita sampatti* (musical wealth). I would like to refer here to the scholarly article by Sri Vasudevacharya — published in the Journal of the Music Academy — Vol. XVIII of the year 1947 devoted exclusively as Sri Tyagaraja Centenary Commemoration Volume, as also to the essay on Sri Purandara Dasa by Sri T.V. Subba Rao. The texts of Tyagaraja and Purandaradasa are published and so the comparison is a definitely easier task. Almost all the attitudes of a *bhakta* seeking the grace of God are found in the *kritis* or *keertanams* of both the composers. The words are elegant and simple, set to *tala* with a natural case. The simple time-measures of *adi*, *misra chapu*, *khanda chapu* and *roopaka tala* are taken with

consummate skill. Only in *sooladis* we get the fuller use of all the *sapta talas*. The appeal of the songs are essentially vocal, a soulful rendering with feeling will take the listeners nearer the *kavi Hridayam*. The emotional appeal is quite pronounced. The simple rhythmic patterns bring out *sarva laghu* in charmingly attractive prominence, unlike as in *Kshetragna padam* or Dikshitar's grand compositions where the *servalaghu* is only dormant. I would give but two instances to illustrate the point. They both derived a lot of inspiration from the *sogasu* of rhythm so effectively conveyed by the *mridangam*. The effect of singing these compositions would be not only to induce the *mridang* artiste but even to inspire him. The use of some consonant letters (*samyukktakjara*) helps us recollect the *dhavani* of *mridangam*. Though *vilamba* has its pride of place and due apportionment, the predominant feature is *madhyamakala*. Indeed the ready appeal of *madhyamakala* with its arresting vivacity (*vir viruppu*) has bestowed those *kritis* and compositions an undue preference in all the *katahen* and recitals. Indeed all the compositions of other composers are being dressed with the *sangatis* and rhythmic settings of Tyagaraja. Even as all arts aspire towards the condition of music, all *kritis* aspire towards the condition of Tyagaraja *kritis*. This assortment of words with a self infused rhythmic emphasis is a chief point of comparison between the two great Masters. Here are a few examples: *Madhwataka Siddhantada Paddhati Bidabadi Badi* or *Bhagya da Lakshmi Baramma* or *Adidano Ranga Adbhata Dindali*.

Compare them with the *swara sahityas* in the *pancharatna kritis*. The most important secret of the ready appeal is their *sowlabhya*; rendered by even the uninitiated, the songs could still be impressive and telling. The *yatiraprasa* and the Sanskrit epithets lend a charm to the diction; the heights to which some of the compositions could rise are to be compared only to the sayings of *rishis* and the Scriptures. The proverbs come in so handy; the disdain of rituals bereft of sincerity is couched in harsh words. Both have castigated the vices in words of unmitigated reproach. The praise of music and its divine appeal provided it is coupled with devotion is a noteworthy point. *Talano Harikela* and *Sangita Gnanamu Bhakti vina sanmargamu Galade?* or *Tala Beku Takka Melabeku* or *Sogasuga Mridanga Tala Gatulu* or *Nannivana Dhyana* and *Nidhichala*

Sukhama, Saga suddha Rasa youto Bhakti and Tamburi Meetidava Bhavabddhi Datidava, instances can be multiplied.

The more difficult task is in comparing the music of the *Karnataka Sangita Pitamaha* with that of Sri Tyagaraja, the greatest composer of Karnatak music. In this, one unfortunate and insurmountable hurdle is the total disappearance of the music of Purandara Dasa in its original form. I would refer here to the essay of Sri T.V. Subba Rao on Sri Purandara Dasa. There are two aspects of Sri Purandara Dasa's music ; one which was meant to give the basis for *lakshana* of various *ragas and talas* ; the other is the wealth of simple devotional music where by the popularisation of simple tunes typical of all the *prasiddha ragas*, he spread the gospel of music and with it the culture of Hindu theology. The relevant extract from Sri T.V. Subba Rao's essay dealing with the music of Purandara Dasa:

"Purandara Dasa has been justly termed the father of Karnatak music. He was not merely a composer but a *lakshanakara* of the highest calibre. The system of South Indian music, as we now know it, is entirely his gift. His greatest achievement is that he systematised it, gave it laws and placed it on such secure foundations that it has continued to remain the same in its essentials. All the famous *ragas* bear the same complexion today as they did in his time. The wonder is not that there is difference in the rendering here and there but that the *raga* forms in the main have preserved the identity. He was the master of both *lakshya* and *lakshana*. It was therefore possible for him not only to give correct shape to the *ragas* but to compose thousands of *kirtanas* to serve as illustrative of them. It might indeed be a surprise to some that *ragas* like *Todi* and *Kalyani* had to be reintroduced by him into the South system. He fixed the main outline of all the *ragas* in vogue in his time with such clarity and precision that there was no chance of their being ever mistaken or distorted. *Dhan-yasi, Mohana, Begada Madhyamavathi, Suruti, Sahana, Varali, Arabhi, Nata, Asavery, Darbar, and, Kannada* to mention but a few are rendered today exactly as they were in his day. The Trinity scrupulously respected the traditions of Sri Pri Purandara Dasa. Dikshitar and Syama Sastri followed him in *raga* and *tala*. There are many Kannada *padas* which if translated into Telugu will remain undistinguished from those of Kshetragna in word and in music.

The first great change effected by Purandara Dasa was to introduce the *malavagowla* scale as the basic scale for music instruction. Not content with prescribing the scale, he framed a graded series of lessons which even today prevail in the teaching of music. The *swaravalis*, *janta varisas*, *alankaras* and *gitas* form the surest road to the mastery of Karnataka music with all its intricacies of *sivara* and *tala prastanas*. He composed four and three quarter lakhs of songs. In every one of them the same perfect commingling of sense, word and music is noticeable. He was a renowned composer of both *lakhsya* and *lakshana geetas*. It is unfortunate however, that only a few *lakshya geetas* have been handed down to us. All his *lakshana geethas* have to be unearthed. He was also a prolific composer of *tana varnas* and *tillanas*. It is stated that Adiappiah modelled his *tana varnas* on those of Purandara Dasa. It is however the *kirtana* that forms the largest class of the compositions of Purandara Dasa. The terms *pada* and *devarnama* used in the description of his composition mean only *kirtana*. A great number of the *kirtanas* are in *madhyamakala*. All the varieties of *tala* are used though *chapu* and *jahmpa talas* are more favoured. It is significant, however, that as compared with his predecessors he employed the *adi tala* in a greater proportion. He was equally facile in composing *chowka kala kirtanas*. Some of his compositions contain the *nayaka nayakibhava* and but for the language they are quite apt to be fancied as *Kshetragnas*.

The *kirtanas* form the bulk of his compositions. Many of them have only the *pallavi* and the *charnas*. Yet there are thousands of them that have the *pallavi*, the *anupallavi* and the *charana*. It is a mistake to suppose that the music of his *kirtanas* is of a plain recitative character with little scope for *manodharma*. There are many songs of his meant merely for *sankirtana* purposes. But a much larger number of them are surcharged with musical excellences of the highest quality. Except in so far as the composer himself did not impose set *sangat*s of a sophisticated nature on them, the compositions themselves are the embodiments of *raga sancharas* of exquisite beauty. As *lakshya* for *lakshana* they possess such high value that they are cited in renowned *lakshana grantas* as unquestioned an authority for *raga sancharas*. *Sangita Samritha* of Tulajaji gives the reference to many of his compositions.

lasting worth. Take for instance *Nambikettavarillavo* in *Kalyani* and *Nidhi chalasukhama* or *Namaodida Kaima* in *Yadukulaksembhoji* and *Needayache* or *Hetcharika garara*. In *Mohana* — *Bidemmina Pada* or *Vishayade Vichara* and *Nannupalimpa*, in *Arabhi* even the basis of *sadhinchenas* is the usual key tune — *Sri Niketana* or *Adidano Ranga* — starting with *panchaman* and taking up *tara shadja* in a typical way. Take *Neeketeliyaka* in *Ananda bhairavi* and *Srinivasa Neena paliso* in *Sahana* — *Yentha Bala vantano* and Tyagaraja's *divyanama kirtanam*. The rhythmic setting of this song is rather strange but impressive — *Summane Dorakuvudeno Ramana Divyanamavu* — and so much after that pattern you get in Tyagaraja's *vinata sutavahanasri* etc. The basic elements of *rakti* in Purandara Dasa's compositions are that the words are simple and easy to sing and comprehend. The rhythm is not dormant but prominent — particularly *sarva laghu*, the needless 108 *talas* are left out, the scope for improvisation is immense; the broad features of the *ragas* are given straightway and not in grandly laid out structures, laboriously laid; the *kalpramana* is predominantly *madhyamakala*; words of great emotion are well matched to soulful output where the supreme importance of the voice is felt. There is *bhakti paravasya* coupled with an abandon in the *raga* setting that takes the listeners to rapturous joys. The balance of the head and heart make the music the bliss of the soul. The simple melodies of folk tunes are duly employed where only a few *swaras* serve as in the compositions in *nowkacharitra* — or *Gata Moha Srita Pala* for all which we have their musical counter parts in *Dasa Sahitya*. *Gata Moha* and *Enagu Ane* or *Deva Banda* are so well matched. The songs have one other great facility. They can be taught with ease even to the uninitiated. For mass awakening there has been nothing like these compositions. So it must be said that Tyagaraja had studied the master — Purandara Dasa, thoroughly and retransformed the musical forms into his own immortal creations of lasting worth. Let me finally refer to the *kriti* of Purandra Dasa that sums up all the attributes of Tyagaraja *kritis* and sets the standard for others to emulate and adopt.

Pallavi 11: *Tala Beku Takka Mela Beku Santa Vele Beku Ganavannu Kelabekambuvarige.*

Ch. (1) *Yati Prasa Virabeku Gatige Nillisa Beku Rati Pati Nolu Ati Prema Virabeku*

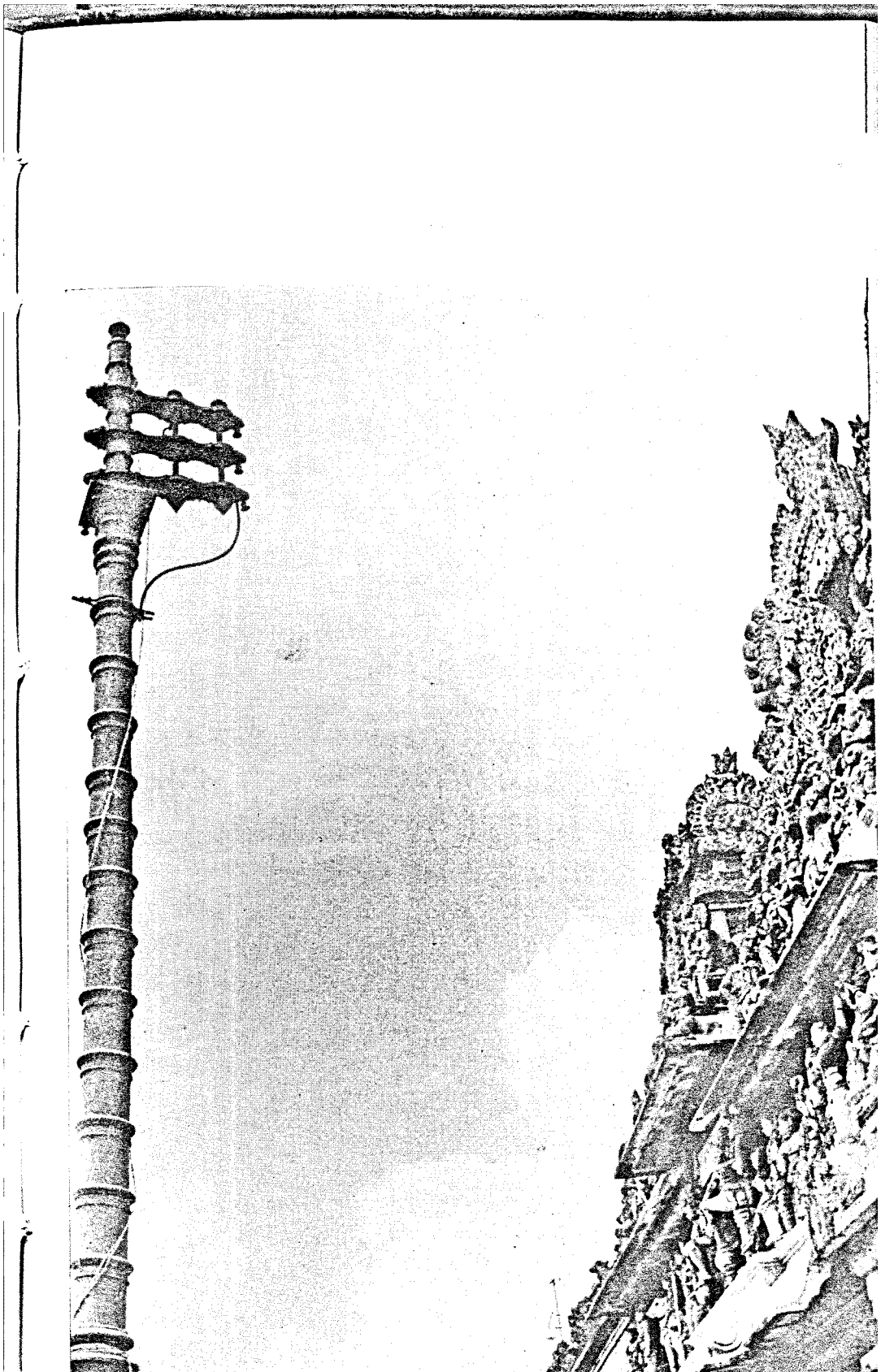
The type of composition which exhibits his extraordinary mastery of the technique of music is the *suladi*. In the *suladi* the theme is the same as in the *kirtana*, but it has usually seven or eight distinct divisions with elaborate *sahitya* each of which is set to one of the classical *talas*. Some *suladis* have different *ragas* for the different divisions, and in some others the *raga* is the same for all the divisions. The *suladi* is a learned elaborate and difficult piece giving a most comprehensive view of all the important *raga sancharas*. *Sangita saramrita* of Tulajendra cites numerous *prayogas* for *suladis* of Purandara Dasa as classic authority for the *lakshana* of *ragas* described in the work. It is regrettable that the tradition of rendering the *suladis* is fast disappearing."

The *tana varnas* and *tillanas* and the *lakshana geetas* of Purandara have not been handed down either in oral tradition nor written down in palm-leaf manuscripts. Even in Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library very few *suladis* are available. The *suladi* in the five *ghana ragas* is a noteworthy feature — *Nata*, *Gowla*, *Arabhi*, *Varali*, and *Sri*. Indeed for quite a few centuries all music recitals, be they *veena* or vocal were started with *tanam* in these *ragas*. The *pancharatna kirtanas* of Tyagaraja were the direct outcome of these *suladis*. But for these *suladis* written to notation by Subba Rama Dikshitar, the only available wealth is the *swaravli*, *pillari geetams* and a few *lakshya geetas* in *ragas* like *Bilahari* and *Narayanagowla*. The list of *ragas* for which references to Sri Purandara Dasa's works are made in *Sangita Saramrita* is quite interesting. In *Ritigowlam Hindolaa Vasatha* the *Mukheri suladi* and *taya prayogas* are written with snatches of *sancharas*. The other *ragas* are *Kannadagowla*, *Sri deva gandhari*, *Salagabhiravi*, *Madhavamanohari*, *Sudda desi*, *Malva sri*, *Ardra desi* (*Duritade bhaya Vake*), *Chaya gowla* (*Satwarige sada Chararige*), *Gurjari*, *Takka*, *Maruva*, *Bibbas*, *Gowla*, *Malahari* both the *pillari geetam* and a *suladi varai*, *Ramakria*, *arabhi narayana desakshii kedara* (*iti ashta tala suladi prayoga*) — *Bhairavi* and *bhoopalam* as distinguished from *bowli*. Other *suladis* generally heard are 'Gali Banda Kaiyyali in *Gowlipantu*, one in *Mohana raga* and a *raga Malika suladi* (*Apada Ananda*).

Now the wealth of music available in the key-tunes of *prasiddha ragas* were duly adopted by Tyagaraja and transformed into classics of

- (2) *Galasuddha Virabeku Tilidu Pelalu Beku Kalavala Bidabeku
Kala Mukha Virabeku*
- (3) *Aritavarira Beku Harusha Hetchali Beku Guru Madhivapati
Vittalane Para Daiva Vena Beku.*

S. Sreenivasa Rao born on 21.8.1918. B.A., B.L. vocalist: Karnatak music. Studied with Pakka Hanumantacharya, Chilarmattur Ramayya, T. L. Venkatarama Iyer, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer. Is at present Principal, Central College of Karnatak Music, Madras.



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புதுச்சேரி

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